

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Alaska Air Guardsman to receive Silver Star

Master Sgt. Roger Sparks to be honored Friday for "extraordinary heroism" in Afghanistan

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska -- A pararescueman with the Alaska Air National Guard's famed 212th Rescue Squadron will pin on the Silver Star -- the nation's third-highest award for valor -- in a ceremony here July 11.

Master Sgt. Roger Sparks was awarded the honor for his actions during a fierce firefight with insurgents in Afghanistan's Watapur Valley Nov. 14, 2010. Responding to a call to retrieve combat casualties in support of Operation Bulldog Bite, Sparks and a fellow pararescueman, Capt. Koa Bailey, descended from helicopter via hoist under enemy fire. Upon touchdown they were both blown off their feet by a rocket-propelled grenade, and Sparks instructed the flight crew via radio not to lower any more personnel due to the high volume of fire.

Under fire from three directions, the pair began communicating with nearby Coalition aircraft to direct air strikes against insurgent positions. Making contact with forces on the ground, they then began to consolidate the wounded and provide treatment.

"Despite the threat of continued enemy fire and with no concern for his personal safety, Master Sgt. Sparks immediately began administering lifesaving procedures with his limited supply of first-aid gear," the citation reads. "When he exhausted his medical supplies, he improvised using belts, t-shirts or boot strings in a desperate attempt to keep his patients alive ... he feverishly triaged chest wounds, punctured lungs, shattered hips, fist-sized blast holes, eviscerated stomachs and arterial bleeders with extremely limited medical supplies and only the light of the moon piercing the darkness."

"Sergeant Sparks exhibited extraordinary resolve, calm and heroism under constant enemy fire for nearly five hours, which resulted in four American lives being saved and four casualties being returned to their families with honor and dignity," the citation continues. "Through his extraordinary heroism, superb Airmanship and resolve in the face of the enemy, Master Sgt. Sparks reflected the highest credit upon himself and the United States Air Force."

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MEDIA: Members of the media are welcome to cover the award ceremony, scheduled to be held at the Arctic Warrior Events Center on JBER at **1 p.m. Friday, July 11**. Please use the contact information above; we will make arrangements to have you escorted on base. Showtime for the ceremony will be 12:15 p.m. at the Boniface Gate.

B-Roll of 212th RQS members deployed to Afghanistan in 2012 available at:
<http://www.dvidshub.net/video/348648/alaska-air-national-guard-212th-rescue-squadron#.U72wsqPTmUI>